elaborating it, to discourage departure from it. The Mongol conquest, in other words, was the beginning of that period of comparative cultural sterility, of sturdy and largely undeviating adherence to traditional models, from which the Chinese were not to be shaken until their revolutionary contacts with the Occident at the close of the nineteenth and in the early years of the twentieth century. To be sure, critics of this complacent orthodoxy were not wanting, but they were in the minority. Moreover, some significant innovations and noteworthy cultural achievements were registered. Compared with earlier periods, however, the tempo of change was slow.

Why this comparative stagnation should have prevailed is not clear. It is possible that the philosophical and artistic activity of the Sung had about reached the natural limits beyond which it could not pass without fresh stimulus from without. The very brilliance of the Sung genius resulted in an art, a philosophy, and a literature which later generations not unnaturally regarded as standard and sought to perpetuate. Sterility may have been due in part to the fact that the Mongol Empire broke down before China could be brought into prolonged intimate contact with foreign cultural contributions which could quicken the Chinese mind to such fresh endeavors as had Buddhism. Islam, the one spiritual importation of importance which under the Mongols was so strengthened as to win a permanent place in Chinese life, made less of an impression than had the Indian faith. Moreover, the type of Islam which reached China was not the bearer of a particularly varied or rich culture. The anti-foreign reaction which accompanied the expulsion of the Mongols sought

to restore and conserve the national heritage and discouraged originality. To the triumph of the examination system must be assigned at least some of the responsibility for the unprogressive conservatism. Whatever the cause or causes, the Mongol conquest marks the end of a period of creativity and the beginning of a long era of relative lack of originality,

THE REIGN OF KHUBILAi: EXTERNAL POLITICS: MONGOL RULE AT ITS HEIGHT

The domination of the Mongols from which dates this transition in Chinese culture was of relatively brief duration. Less